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The theme of this month's Archimedes World is everything under a tenner. So it is fitting that we take an even closer look at the world of public domain software. As well as the latest disks from APDL and Arcaynia we present a roundup of the best programs previously covered in this column. To help you get at the mountains of PD software we also present a comprehensive list of PD library addresses.

New Stuff

Fantasy Pics (APDL D010)

Along with a demo of the *Alerion* shoot'em up there is a collection of high quality fantasy pictures. They are all hand drawn with superb use of lighting effects. My favourite is a glass full of magical-looking potion.

Misc Games (APDL B047)

For would be high flyers there is a stock market simulator. *Splat* is an unusual game where you gobble dots off the screen with a satisfying burping noise. On later levels the tricky devils run away from the pointer. *Splords* is a totally naff two player space duel. *!TaiPei* is a good desktop version of the oriental tile game of Mah Jong. The graphics are garish but bearable. A desktop version of the *Yahtzee* dice game is also provided to amuse you.

Sorcerers Domain (APDL B048)

An arcade adventure game which provides a suite of desktop editors allowing you to redefine the whole game from sprites to the layout of levels. The editors are extremely easy to operate due to the RISC OS window system. The game itself is great fun to play. It starts off simple but soon becomes very challenging. The graphics are well designed and animated. If they are not good enough for you, then you can edit them. You can even edit the way the game works. For lasting interest this game cannot be beaten, it has everything that arcade adventure fans could ask for.

More Misc Games (APDL B049)

!ArcAnnoy is a naff bat and blocks game. *!Daleks* may not look too good but it plays quite well. You guide Dr. Who among a screen full of Daleks whose touch is lethal. The object is to cause the Daleks to crash into each other and the burning pyres that they leave behind. Once all the Daleks have been cleared on a level even more appear to replace them. Watch simulated life forms fight for survival in *!Microcosm*. *!Patience+* is a very good implementation of the classic card game with very good graphics and sound. *!Pong* is a simple two bats and a ball game with lovely presentation. You have more control over your bat resulting in quite an enjoyable game. *!Rubik* is a cube simulator which enables you to solve the puzzle. *!Solitaire* is a very well presented desktop puzzle. It has smart graphics and helpful messages appear if you do things wrong. *!Wordwiz* is like mastermind but with letters instead of coloured pegs.

Accounts (APDL B050)

CAST Cash Book is a shareware cash transaction recorder. It is menu controlled and provides many options. It takes a while to learn how to use as it is not very intuitive. *CAST Stock Controller* provides full facilities for recording quantities, value, supplier details, etc. Two bank account databases are provided; one takes over the whole display while the other is a RISC OS desktop application. Together they offer all you need to keep a record of your bank accounts. The Extras directory contains *!SciCalc* which is a full implementation of a scientific calculator for use on the desktop.

Fonts (Arcaynia H05)

A collection of high quality, low cost outline fonts. This disk contains: an ornate capitals only headline font called *Algerian*; a script font called *Brushscript* for handwriting style lettering; *Barcode* provides the full set of characters required to put together a product barcode like the one on the front of this mag; plus *Buckingham*, *Revue* and *Swz*. This disk costs just £1.50 and is superb value for money. There are five other disks available full of outline fonts at the same low price and are highly recommended.

Utils (Arcaynia E20)

!Calc is a desktop calculator with three displays for entering expressions. A very neat desktop calendar with a print option will ensure that you always know what date it will be next wednesday. *!CDindex* is a custom database which makes keeping track of a large CD collection easy. There are three character definers provided, the best of which is *!Designer*. A chart drawer produces a saved screen which can be loaded into a DTP package. It can produce various diagrams including a pie chart or bar graph. *!Compile* is a handy desktop front end for a C or Pascal compiler, simply drag source files to the icon and it does the rest. *!Convert* is a utility for converting Interword documents to pure ASCII. *!Compare* checks if two files are the same or not. *!Compact* is a fast and efficient ADFS disk compacter and two DFS disk filers called *!DFS* and *!DFSRead* are supplied for those wanting to access DFS disks. *!Diary* is a very useful program for storing notes and memos about future events. Notes can be attached to any date in the calendar. They can then be saved to disk and printed out if required. There are some more utilities on the disk which make it very good value.

German Neighbours (Arcaynia B49)

A badly sampled theme tune taken from what seems to be the German version of the Neighbours soap. Avoid this at all costs!

Big Films (Arcaynia A49)

This application is simply a collection of poor quality digitized stills taken from some big films such as *Running Man*, *Nightmare on Elm St.* and others. The whole thing is not very impressive and quite boring.

Demos

QRT Demo1 (APDL D061)

A series of none too interesting animations generated using the *QRT* PD raytracing package. The music is repetitive and the scrolling text long and drawn out. Overall the whole thing is just too slow moving.

QRT Demo2 (APDL D062)

A cute spherical character called blibbles has an adventure in a raytraced world. He bounces around and finds true love. The animation is quite entertaining but still a bit slow moving.

Bananaland (APDL D063)

!Ba is a preview of a megademo currently being written by Dublin based SICK. A squidgy text which resembles a ribbon blowing in the wind floats past against a starfield backdrop. Two more scrolltexts smoothly flow past. It is impossible to read all three at once. After the squidgy text, spuon dancing balls flow in cyclical patterns. This is followed promptly by an amazing sequence showing two globes bouncing around in 3D with the spheres enlarging and reducing as they get nearer and further away. The demo ends with a long list of film style credits scrolling up the screen. Look out for the skull and cross bones in the static at the end.

!Froggy is a superb animation of a frog playing on a swing hanging from a

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tree branch. The movement and lighting are very realistic. *!StingRay* is a poor quality set of sampled sounds and pictures ported from the ST, yeuch! *!DDD* simply turns all the icons on the desktop into 3D versions. Vertical scrolltexts and starfields set *!DreamSide* apart from the rest of the crowd.

ARMageddon's *!Flip* demo shows a flash Ferrari car being uncovered as grey tiles flip over. A sound track and a blurred scrolltext finish off this average demo. *!MegaNet* has all the usual ingredients but nothing special apart from flashing keyboard LEDs, WOW!

Pathetic Demos Inc. have two offerings. The first is a very smooth but unoriginal demo. The second shows the sleeping girl picture being rotated as if on a barrel. You can control the speed and direction with the mouse. This disk is a must for all demo collectors.

Ace Demos (Arcaynia F47)

!Balls shows 128 sprites swirling around the screen in a very soothing pattern. *!MyDemo* has a great soundtrack as well as a large logo which wobbles as if in a movie dream sequence. A smooth scrolltext rounds off a slick presentation. *!Scroller*, as the name suggests, shows a very colourful background scrolling in all directions. On this a long wavy scrolltext goes past and a field of tiny balls undulates in 3D wave patterns. All this and another good soundtrack are well worth watching for while although the scrolling is not too smooth.

The Joker can be found on the RML Public Domain Library - sample disk 2

!Starfield has the most scrolling parallax stars I have yet seen. *!TheRing* is the best demo of the bunch. After a long wait you see a starfield zoom from the centre of the screen. Now comes a shape made up of raytraced balls. The balls enlarge and reduce in perspective producing a most convincing 3D effect. A series of different shapes zoom out, rotate for while and then zoom away again. Again this disk is not to be missed.

FlumpSoft & Bogey (Westbourne Services sample disk)

The *!Flump1* demo has a colourful logo shown against a fast moving starfield. The most impressive part of the demo is the rotating ball in the centre of the screen. This actually has the flump sprite mapped onto it in realtime. *Zombiesoft* Demo6 shows a very wavy scrolltext going over a large spaceship scrolling vertically in the background. It would make an excellent backdrop for a shoot'em up so how about it guys? The text is quite witty and contains some amusing observations on life.

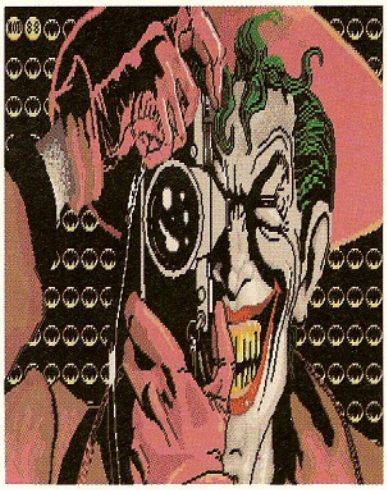
!Bogey is a detailed animation made with Ace Computing's Euclid suite of software. It is the best Euclid film I have ever seen. It displays a caricatured head of Humphrey Bogart watching the letter E float past. Bogey then says 'Here's looking at Euclid!' It is amazing to watch as the expression on his face changes and his eyes pop out of their sockets.

Demo_A (RML Sample disk 1)

This is one of the most entertaining demos available. Loads of shaded balls turn into various rotating and bouncing shapes. A good soundtrack provides the backing music and an interesting scrolltext narrates the action. The shapes include a man who likes leaping for joy, a helicopter that crashes, an adrenelin molecule and some wiggly worms.

DataDemoII (DataStream Example disk 2)

Written exclusively for the *DataStream* PD library this is a reasonable quality demo. The best part is the partially playable game which is built in. You control a spaceship which has to fly past some very nasty ice floats. The passages get extremely tight in places. It is a preview of a full feature shoot'em up which is currently under development. You can get the source code for this demo for just £6.



The Best PD

The following disks are all available from APDL and have been covered in previous Nearly Free columns.

B005 *Dungeon Quest*, a Gauntlet type game for 1 or 4 players.

B010 *Fish*, a memory game for two players and *Arcade Hangman*. There is also a rotating skull demo containing nearly 200K of sprites and a gallery of seven compacted Mode 15 pictures. There is also a set of excellent "wierd" sprites including eyeballs and monsters.

B011 *Yet Another Invaders Game* by Bjorn Flotten a very addictive version of the classic arcade game.

B012 *Translator* by John Kortink. Converts pictures from ST, Amiga, Mac and GIF format to Arc sprites. Some demo screens are included. Also supplied are *MakeGIF* and *MakeTIFF*. These applications convert Arc sprites to GIF and TIFF format.

B013 *Quick Ray Tracer*. An easy to use image generation system that uses a Ray-tracing algorithm for image rendering. It comes complete with a user manual on disc and a number of examples.

B015 *Arctist Plus*, a 256 colour art package. Quite good and a lot cheaper than Artisan etc.

B018 *Calc*, a shareware version of the commercial spreadsheet of the same name. Commands are available through Fkeys and typed commands, includes a few example spreadsheets. Also an excellent version of Life with a full tutorial. *Sizzle*, a program to flick through various screens using different visual effects. It is easily adapted for use with your own screens.

B026 *Hyperbook*. A desktop hypertext database system by Nick Vaniles.

B030 *Disk utilities. Dustbin*, multi tasking formatter, MSDOS disk catalogue from ADFS, QL Disk utilities, Desktop *Settype and *Stamp, hard disk backup, disk recovery utils, *DFSread*, *DFSwrite*, *!FileTypes*, *!Dir*, *Msdosread*, disk sector editor, *Pathswitch*, *!SysUtil*, *!StickyBD* and a few disk copiers.

B031 *!AppHelp* provides a help utility for an application. *!IconCLI* lets you issue *commands from the Icon bar. *!LineEdit* for editing CLI commands. *!LoadProgs* is for loading rather than running BASIC files from the Desktop. *!Logga* logs your time actually spent using the Arc. *!Warfarin* emulates the mouse with the cursor keys. Also included are a file comparer, *!ShortKeys*, *VDU_Saver*, *ModeExtend* (displays Hi-res modes on non Hi-res monitor) and an *ARM3 cache* switcher.

B032 RISC OS 2.00 Extras disc. Updates to the two applications discs, including a new *!65Host*, Modules, !System and Printer drivers.

B033 *Draw1*$^{1}/_{2}$, an improved Shareware version of Draw with some of the bugs of Acorn's version eliminated and a few bells and whistles added. Complete with a 45K text file and a few demo Draw files. *!DrwCgm*, a utility for converting Acorn Draw files to CGM format for use with PCs. *!DrawLink* for linking ASCII text files into a format suitable for inclusion in !Draw/!Draw1$^{1}/_{2}$ as a text area. Also *!StrongED*, an alternative to !Edit, uses less memory and scrolls a lot faster. *!Italiciser* italicises Draw files.

B038 *Dimension*. A strange 3D landscape is being overrun by metallic balls. As a sliding red tile, your task is to collect all of the yellow tiles, some of which are locked behind orange doors. A RISC OS compatible editor is also included so you can design your own screens. There are eight demo screens supplied.

B039 AMFsoft PD disk 2. There is a utility to change the form of sprites, CMOS RAM editor, desktop notepad, front end for BASIC Editor, mouse speed definer, a directory manager, a desktop

stopwatch and a desktop version of Life.

B040 Games disk 3. *GNU Chess*, *Ladybird* (a Pacman type game), an Icon bar bat'n ball game and more.

B041 *DSEdit*, a raw digitised sound editor with a number of example digitised sounds that can be played and manipulated through DSEdit.

B042 Three expression evaluators, measurement and currency convertors, two cassette inlay printers *!Cassette* and *!InlayPrnt* (this one can be output as a Draw file). *!VideoBase* which handles real time tape counters, Pipedream to Impression data transfer util, *!QZap* desktop disassembler and *!PrintSet* allows selection of printer facilities from the desktop. *!PrBuffer*, a desktop printer buffer controller.

B043 *!Attribute* allows view/setting of file attributes, *!Find* looks for files, *!Keys* allows the Fkeys to issue commands to the OS while operating within RISC OS, *!MakeApp* converts BASIC files into applications, *!RMA_Man*, *!ModeUtil*, *!Mouse* (speed controller), *!NewBar* places the icon bar within a moveable window, new pointers, teletext screen to sprite convertor, an outline to bitmap font convertor and *!StartTask*.

B046 *Graph Creator*, allows data to be entered in a RISC OS compatible application and saved as Draw or data files. Bar charts (normal and 3D), scattergrams, line and pie charts are available. *SlideBase*, a slide database allowing slide data to be entered and modified, searched and printed out. Many features included : Boxes, codes and bits that can be set to show that a slide contains a certain item. Also two outline fonts, *!FontDraw*, a number of Draw files and a *Citizen 120D+* text printer driver.

D023 *!Underground*. The 1990 London Underground map contained in one very large sprite file.

D044 Miscellaneous demos 2. Over 1200K of demos, *BallsDemo* and *Arcangels* by Arc Angel, *Armaniac2*, *TCD Demo1* by The Chip Duo and Arctic Software's *PDemo*.

D045 Two demos from Network XXIII, *Demo1* and *Demo2* otherwise known as Granny Chow and Wibble.

D048 Four demos from Archima/Pisoft based in Belgium, some very nice effects. *!Archima*, *!Automate*, *!Demolition* and *!Wierd*.

D052 Seven demos, *!Demo_A*, *!PV_DEMO*, *!Ripoff*, *MEDWAY1*, *!DEMO* (Bouncy bar demo), *!Flump1* and *BLOB* (Zombiesoft demo 6).

D053 SEM Pics 1. Some amazing pictures taken on a Scanning Electron Microscope and converted into Sprite files. Four pictures on this disc, one of some strands of cotton and three close ups of flies 50x and 100x magnification.

D055 *MegaDemo* by Armaxess, a truly mega demo in six parts. Also *Aquarium*, an animated backdrop replacing the dull grey desktop. It shows a picture of an aquarium with as many or few fish as you like and a realistic bubbling sound. *!Overscan1* by Medway 256 and *Arabela1* also included.

D057 Three cartoon demos from German group Software Evolutions, *Lucky Luke*, *Cubitus* and *Disc Run*. Amusing and definitely different to any other Arc demos to date.

E000 Soundtracker utilities. Including *TrackCtrl* which resides on the Desktop and allows control of the four sound channels pause tunes and internal speaker on/off. *!Restore* breaks up modules into seperate instruments. Plus various other utils and a few tunes.

Library Addresses

APDL

96 Lanehouse Road, Thornaby, Cleveland, TS17 8EA.

Disks prefixed B cost £2.50 and disks prefixed D are £1.75 each. Each disk is crammed full of software often with the help of the *!Spark* file archive utility. If you buy 6 disks or more you get 10% off and 20% off 10 disks or more. There is also a disk subscription service which is good value.

Diamond Public Domain

86 Meadowbank, Moor Lane, Holyway, Holywell, CLYWYD, CH8 7EF.

Prices start from £1.50 per disk. All proceeds from this library are donated to charity.

Skyfall Public Domain

93 Jayshaw Avenue, Birmingham, B43 5RX.

Prices start from £1.50 per disk.

Arcaynia

PO Box 1927, Sutton Coldfield, B74 3QZ.

Prices start from £1.50 per disk.

The Data Stream

32 Hollinwell Avenue, Wollaton, Nottingham, NG8 1JZ.

Prices start from £1.00 per disk. All the proceeds from this library are donated to Macedon House which provides accomadation for the homeless. This is a very worthy cause and by buying your PD here you will be helping people less fortunate than yourself. The first sample disk they provided was crammed full of interesting software. Two very practical utilities are *!ARCOutlin* which is an ideas planner and *!NewChars2* which displays the full character set in a desktop window including any outline font selected. The second disk contains their exclusive playable demo (see above) and various other items. The example clipart is two Draw files of *TopCat* and *Yogi Bear* which are well drawn and brightly coloured. This library is worthy of close investigation.

Mr Bee PD

3 Willoughby Lane, Widmerpool, Notts, NG12 5PU.

Prices start from £1.30 per disk.

ACME Public Domain

17 May Avenue, Wollaton, Nottingham, NG8 2NE.

The Datafile PD

22 Duxford Drive, Aldergrove, Co. Antrim, N.Ireland BT26.

Two example disks give you a good idea of the kind of software these guys can provide. The first disk has the usual mix of clip art, music, pictures and desktop toys. There is a useful desktop stopwatch with a realistic LED display. The second example disk is a real gem. *!Spraycan* surprises you when an invisible hand takes over the pointer and scrawls a message across the desktop. *!Scape* is an amazing mandelbrot program which not only allows you to generate the set and zoom in but show the zoomed section as a 3D landscape. You can rotate it for viewing at any angle and alter parameters such as height and colour scheme. These make this disk and the whole library worthy of close investigation. A clear message to other libraries is to make your example disks very interesting and unique.

Telstar PD

40 Alderbrook Close, Rolleston On Dove, Staffs, DE13 8AH.

Prices start from £2.50 per disk. The more disks you buy the less they cost. It is worthwhile buying them in large batches rather than just one at a time. Anyone sending in new PD software will receive software for free. The catalogue disk has an easy reference guide to what is in the library. Also on the disk are example utilities, clip art, sound tracks, Maestro files and the raytraced hangman game.

Westbourne Services

Westbourne House, 34 Bradley Street, Wotton-under-Edge, Glos., GL12 7AR.

Prices start from £1.50 per disk. Buy 5 disks and you get one free. Royalties can be payed to authors who send in their software but this will probably be very small. A catalogue and sample disk can be had for just £1.00. This disk contains the excellent *!Flump1* and *Zombiesoft* demos as well as the *Bogie* and *Olaf* animated films.

RML Public Domain Library

24 Penryn Close, Norwich, Norfolk, NR4 7LY.

Prices start from £2.00 per disk. A sample disk can be yours for £1.20. The first sample disk I looked at has the very entertaining *!Demo_A* on it. It also contains some reasonable digitized pictures and a handy icon bar clock module. Two of the best desktop toys is the classic deskduck which is very well animated and a rotating raytraced A on the task manager icon. The second disk has some good quality Atari ST pictures the best of which is *The Joker*(opposite). A very playable desktop dominoes game called *!Dominoes* is provided along with *!DSEdit* and some Star Trek samples.